

WASHINGTON – Election reforms included in the Help America Vote Act, and efforts to implement them over the past several years have led to significant improvements in the administration of elections in this country, members of the Committee on House Administration were told Thursday, although much work remains to be done and improvements continue to be made across the country.

In an oversight hearing Thursday morning, the four members of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) reported on their work in implementing the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 and offered their views of what can be expected as Americans vote in 2006.

“The changes that EAC has helped states and local governments make in federal election administration will affect every voter in this country,” said EAC Chairman Paul DeGregorio. DeGregorio and his fellow commissioners – Vice Chairman Ray Martinez III, Commissioner Donetta Davidson and Commissioner Gracia Hillman – detailed the work the EAC has focused on since its inception, including:

- Helping states implement HAVA election reforms, such as improving voting systems, creating statewide voter registration lists; providing provisional voting systems and providing polling place information to voters;
- Educating elections officials about their roles and responsibilities under HAVA;
- Creating voluntary voting system guidelines;
- Accrediting voting system testing laboratories;
- Certifying voting systems;
- Acting as a National Clearinghouse for election information;
- Providing guidance and information on HAVA to the states.

“With these changes will come unexpected situations, even mistakes,” Martinez said. “We cannot anticipate in a process that involves so many people that it will work flawlessly the first time. What we can embrace, however, is that the process has been irrevocably changed for the better.”

Committee Chairman Vernon J. Ehlers, R-Mich., agreed, saying that substantial progress has been made in improving our nation’s election systems.

“Thanks to HAVA and the work of the EAC, the likelihood of any major problems occurring is greatly diminished, although I have no doubt that we will keep finding new issues to deal with,” Ehlers said. “I am very pleased with the progress that has been made. We are a long way removed from the days of hanging, dimpled and pregnant chads.”